

Pastor's Column

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"Health Care For All"

Presently in the State of California, Governor Schwarzenegger has made a pledge of universal health care for the people of California.

There are now three plans that are being discussed. This is a special moment that, pray God, will be a movement in the right direction and will begin to address the health care crisis in this state and in this country.

Catholics, and all people of good will, are encouraged to see universal health care as a faith agenda item, and to become involved in the reform of health care in our state and in our country.

In their 2005 pastoral letter, "**Health and Health Care**," the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops called for a "comprehensive health care system that will ensure a basic level of health care for all Americans."

Pope John XXIII, in his encyclical, "**Peace on Earth**," listed health care among those basic rights which flow from the sanctity and dignity of human life.

In the same tradition, Pope John Paul II addressed the need for health care in "**On Human Work**," which focused on the availability and affordability of health care for workers.

In "**Health and Health Care**," the bishops explain that, for the Catholic community, health and the healing ministry take on particular significance because of the Church's involvement as provider of health care services through its various ministries and as a major purchaser of health care insurance for its employees.

In the debate over health care insurance, the bishops will continue to use as their guide the "criteria for reform" from their "**Framework for Comprehensive Health Care Reform**." Among the criteria for health care reform they will apply to policy proposals are:

- **Respect for Life:** whether it preserves and enhances human life from conception to natural death.

- **Priority Concern for the Poor:** whether it gives special priority to health care needs of the poor, ensuring that their health care is quality health care.
- **Universal Access to Comprehensive Benefits:** whether it provides universal access to comprehensive benefits sufficient to maintain and promote good health.
- **Pursuing the Common Good and Preserving Pluralism:** whether it allows and encourages the involvement of all sectors, including the religious and voluntary sectors, in all aspects of health care, ensuring respect for the ethical and religious values of consumers and providers.

The bishops urge all state and national leaders to look beyond special interests and partisanship and to unite our nation in a "new commitment to meeting the health care needs of our people, especially the poor and vulnerable."

You are encouraged to take time to become more aware of the status of health care in our state and to become involved. Encourage your representatives and senators to come together on universal health care for all the people of California.

Watch and read the Bulletin for more information. Go online to become more knowledgeable of the health care statistics. Get active!

Included in today's Bulletin is an article that I wrote that gives a more detailed Scriptural background that provides a context as to why health and health care are truly faith issues.

Please take time to read and pray over, "**Universal Health Care—What's Faith Got To Do With It?**" (*see next page*)

Fr. Mike

UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE— WHAT'S FAITH GOT TO DO WITH IT?

—Rev. Michael Ratajczak

Activism Defined

“Activism” can be described as intentional action to bring about social or political change.

This action is in support of, or in opposition to, one side of an often controversial argument.

The word “activism” is often used synonymously with protest or dissent, but activism can stem from any number of political orientations and take a wide range of forms, from writing letters to newspapers or politicians, political campaigning, economic activism (such as boycotts or preferentially patronizing preferred businesses), rallies and street marches, strikes, or even guerilla tactics.

In the more confrontational cases, an activist may be called a freedom fighter by some and a terrorist by others, depending on whether the commentator supports the activists' ends.

Transformational Activism

Transformational activism is the idea that people need to transform on the inside as well as on the outside in order to create any meaningful change in the world.

Religion as Transformational Activism

Being people of Faith, regardless of the Faith Tradition—Jew, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Baha'i, Mormon, or any other Faith Tradition, we need to remember that religion, as we move from word to deed, is transformational activism.

As Gandhi once said, “Be the change you want to see in the world.”

We are engaged in transformational activism, as we become involved with the Health Care Crisis in this nation.

Worldwide, the United States ranks 37th in Health Care, just two notches above Cuba, which ranks 39th. We need transformation!

The Hebrew Scriptures

“Bless the Lord, my soul; all my being, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, my soul; do not forget all the gifts

of God, who pardons all your sins, heals all your ills.” (Psalm 103:1-3)

“Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against your fellow countrymen. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.” (Leviticus 19:18)

“The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; God has sent me to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty

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The same should be true for us!***

to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord and a day of vindication by

our God, to comfort all who mourn.” (Isaiah 61:1-2)

Ancient Hebrew health laws were not separate from the faith of the people. They were an integral part of the covenant relationship with God and with the community of faith.

The covenant relationship not only expressed the compassion of God, but it gave laws for the entirety of life within the community based on love for neighbor as self.

The ancient prophet, Isaiah, speaks of One anointed by the spirit of God who would bring good news to the oppressed, bind up the broken-hearted, proclaim liberty to captives, and release to prisoners.

The prophet does so with the understanding of the unity of God's human creature as body, mind, and spirit. Human wholeness (health) has been from the beginning of Creation a part of the profound Hebrew grasp of the balance, harmony, and unity of God's SHALOM.

Jesus, the Jew, was nurtured in the knowledge that religion and health went hand in hand!

The Christian Scriptures— The Beginning of the Ministry of Jesus

“Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.'

Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, 'Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.'" (Luke 4:16-21)

The Christian believes that Jesus is the Anointed One of whom the Prophet Isaiah spoke.

It is not by accident that Jesus begins his ministry by quoting at Nazareth the words of the prophet, defining not only his ministry, but that of his disciples.

The Christian Scriptures— The Mission of the Twelve

"Jesus summoned the Twelve and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick." (Luke 9:2)

Jesus sent out his disciples to proclaim the reign of God and to heal. The disciples departed and went through the villages, bringing the Good News and curing diseases everywhere.

The Gospel Writer informs the reader that Jesus sent out the Twelve to continue His mission and ministry – to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.

If we recognize and accept the good things that Jesus did, how then can we not be about the business of health and healing for all people?

In the Scriptures, there is no evidence that Jesus turned anyone away who was brought to him for healing.

For Jesus, faith and health were part of the same message. The same should be true for us!

The Christian Scriptures— John the Baptist's Question

"...John summoned two of his disciples and sent them to Lord to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?'"

When the men came to Him, they said, 'John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?"'"

At that time, Jesus cured many of their diseases,

sufferings, and evil spirits; he also granted sight to many who were blind. And He said to them in reply,

'Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the Good News proclaimed to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me.'" (Luke 7:18-23)

Later, when Jesus had cured many people of diseases, plagues and evil spirits and had given sight to many who were blind, the disciples of the imprisoned John the Baptist came to see Jesus.

They raised the question as John had instructed them, "Are you the One who is to come, or are we to wait for another?"

Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have Good News brought to them."

For Jesus there was no distinction between preaching Good News to the poor and healing their illnesses. His ministry was more than a proclamation of the Word of God; it was an implementation of it!

For all who follow Jesus, and for all people of good will, this is our task as well.

We are mindful that this struggle for Health Care Reform and Universal Health Coverage is enormous! Someone once said, "You can fight a porcupine and win, but if other folks get a look at you they may think it's a bad idea to mess with porcupines."

We need to make sure that we do not let those "other folks" hold us back. Bring on the porcupine! We need Health Care Reform and Universal Health Coverage.

1. *The definitions for Activism and Transformational Activism were taken from Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia.*
2. *Although rearranged significantly, much of the content of the Hebrew Scriptures and Christian Scriptures "portions" of this presentation were taken from "Where Else Should We Be? Universal Health Care, A Faith Agenda" by Bishop Leontine T.C. Kelly, retired, The United Methodist Church; President, The Interreligious Health Care Access Campaign, 1994.*
3. *The "porcupine" quote belongs to Neal Knox. It is entitled "Putting Up a Fight."*

